

180 B

A FEW PLAIN WORDS

WITH THE

RANK AND FILE OF THE UNION ARMIES.

Published by the Union Congressional Committee.

I.

Napoleon wittily warned governments to "beware when bayonets should learn to think;" but with us, far from being a subject of fear, it is our glory and pride that the war for the Union has been upheld by a million of "thinking bayonets." Despots may tremble when the bayonets that sustain their thrones learn to think; but when free men rise in arms to defend free institutions, what "thinking" can be more true, more wise, more patriotic than theirs?

It is thinking bayonets that compose our army. It is "thinking" that inspired those bayonets; and it is because they are in the grasp of thinking men that they are clothed with all their majesty and power. When dark days have come upon our land, when the sibilant tongue of the copperhead has been heard to hiss his base whispers of surrender, when the wisest could not see their way clear, and the hearts of the most patriotic sunk within them, hope and light and courage have flashed forth from the gleam of these same thinking bayonets.

It is you, Oh million of thinking bayonets, that have led the way, that have shamed our pusillanimity, that have taught the nation what *patriotism* is. If Peace now begins to dawn on our land, it is because through four years of dread war, in bright and dark days, you have carried the Union in your hearts and on your bayonets. When peace comes it will be honorable and lasting because your bayonets have made it so; and yours will be the glory and the honor. "When the war closes," says the great captain who has led the army of the West from Chattanooga to Atlanta, in a letter lately written to a humble private soldier in his army: "When the war closes I will, if I survive it, make it my study to give full honor and credit to the soldiers in the ranks, who, though in humble capacity, have been the working hands by which the nation's honor and manhood have been vindicated."

The voice of the nation re-affirms this declaration of General Sherman. History will celebrate as the true heroes of the grand War for the Union not those who have held the high places of command, but those hundreds of thousands of what Kossuth called "nameless heroes"—the rank and file of our armies, *who, shoulder to shoulder and touching elbows*, have carried the war through to results which ensure its glorious consummation.

II.

If ever there was a time when Union bayonets were called on to *think*, it is now. The crisis of the war, when our armies have the rebellion in their grasp and are preparing to deal its death-blow, finds the country precipitated into the turmoil of a Presidential election. This election touches you, because in becoming *soldiers* you did not cease to be *citizens*; but it touches you even more closely than it does those of us who are merely citizens and *not* soldiers: for the issue is presented whether this war for the Union in which you are battling is a delusion and a mockery—whether the priceless blood shed shall go for no more than water spilt on the ground—whether you shall lay down your arms and sue rebels to make on *their* terms the peace you thought your valor had nearly won. That you may see this and no other is the real issue which will be tried on the 8th day of November next—read with all the care you can command the creed of the two candidates claiming your suffrages:

The *Union* platform resolves:

That it is the highest duty of every American citizen to *maintain against all their enemies the integrity of Union*, and the paramount authority of the Constitution and laws of the United States, and that laying aside all differences and political opinions, we pledge ourselves as Union men, animated by a common sentiment, and aiming at a common object, to do everything in our power to aid the Government in quelling by force of arms the rebellion now raging against its authority, and in bringing to the punishment due to their crimes the rebels and traitors arrayed against it.

That we approve the determination of the Government of the United States not to compromise with rebels or to offer any terms of peace except such as may be based upon an "UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER" of their hostility and a return to their just allegiance to the Constitution and the laws of the United States; and that we call upon the Government to maintain this position and to prosecute the war with the utmost vigor to the most complete suppression of the rebellion, in full reliance upon the self-sacrifice, the patriotism, the heroic valor and the undying devotion of the American people to their country and its free institutions.

That the thanks of the American people are due to the soldiers and sailors of the army and navy, who have periled their lives in defense of their country and in vindication of the honor of the flag; that the nation owes to them some permanent recognition of their patriotism and their valor, and ample and permanent provision for those of their survivors who have received disabling and honorable wounds in the service of the country: and that the memories of those who have fallen in its defense shall be held in grateful and everlasting remembrance.

The *Copperhead* platform resolves:

That this convention does explicitly declare as the sense of the American people that after FOUR YEARS OF FAILURE TO RESTORE THE UNION BY THE EXPERIMENT OF WAR, during which, under the pretence of a military necessity, or war power higher than the Constitution, the Constitution itself has been disregarded in every part, and public liberty and private right alike trodden down, and the material prosperity of the country essentially impaired, justice, humanity, liberty, and the public welfare demand that IMMEDIATE EFFORT BE MADE FOR A CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES, with a view to an ultimate convention of all the States, or other peaceable means, to the end that at the earliest practicable moment peace may be restored on the basis of the Federal Union of the States.

There are other declarations made in each; but they do not touch essentials. The vital principle in each case is contained in these utterances.

The former, it need not be said, is the platform on which it is proposed

Abraham Lincoln shall continue for another term the administration of the government. The latter is the platform on which George B. McClellan comes forward to claim your suffrages and those of the nation.

The issue is here drawn in such clear and palpable lines that no man—far less any *soldier*—can mistake it. It is not a personal issue. It is not a question whether Abraham Lincoln or George B. McClellan shall be President. It is a question whether or not we shall have a Constitution and a country left us.

The prime points in the Chicago copperhead platform—those which give it its distinctive character—are these :

1. The assertion of our “*failure to restore the Union by the experiment of war.*”

2. The demand that “*immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities.*”

The copperhead creed very properly joins these assertions in the relation of logical sequence : that is, “immediate efforts should be made for a cessation of hostilities” *because* “the experiment of war” has been a “failure.” The premises granted, the conclusion naturally follows.

But suppose you do *not* grant it—suppose a voice, which is already audible in the air, mingling the fierce protests of indignant men with the dread clamor of triumphant artillery and vollied thunders along the line, rolls up from Petersburg to Atlanta and from Atlanta to Mobile Bay, to hurl back the slander that dares thus belittle your matchless achievements. We tell you, soldiers, that voice is echoed back by a nation that thinks with you that a war which in three years has reclaimed from the rebels three-fourths of a territory as large as all Europe, has driven their armies from point to point, beaten them in scores of the greatest battles on record, reduced their whole fighting material from more than three-quarters of a million to between a hundred and a hundred and fifty thousand, captured their chief cities, destroyed their great lines of communication, and now holds their whole coast in strictest blockade, will need some other word than “*failure*” to sum up its swelling content and result. “Failure in the *experiment of war*,” forsooth ! It is an insult to your glorious deeds and your glorious dead, and could only have been used by men with whom the wish of “failure” was father to the *thought*.

In what magnificent contrast with the slanderous falsehoods of these miserable men stand the declarations lately made by the Lieutenant General commanding the armies of the United States ! Standing on an eminence whence he surveys the whole continental field of battle, whence his eyes take in all the elements that enter into the dread problem of war, he affirms that the rebellion is doomed, that the rebel armies are all but used up, and that *the one thing needed to secure an early restoration of the Union is a determined unity of sentiment at the North.* “The rebels,” says he, “have now in their ranks their last man. The little boys and old men are guarding prisoners, guarding railroad bridges, and forming a good part of their garrisons or intrenched positions. A man lost by them cannot be replaced. They have robbed the cradle and the grave equally to get their present force. Besides what they lose in frequent skirmishes and battles, they are now losing from desertions and other causes at least one regiment per day. With this drain upon them, *the end is not far distant, if we will only be true to ourselves. Their only hope now is in a divided North.*” It is in this state of facts, when the life-blood of the rebellion is ebbing away, when our victorious columns are marching on from victory to victory, when the soul of the nation is stirred and vivified with a breath of the old-time patriotic fire, when the Government finds the revival of the volunteer spirit such (reaching from five to ten thousand recruits per day) that it can afford to dispense with the operations of the draft as a slower recruiting agent than the spontaneous patriotism of the people presents,—it is amid this inspiring present-

ment of material and moral elements that the resolutions of a great convention propose that "*immediate* efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities"! Is this the sober utterance of men claiming to control the destinies of a great nation, or is it only a piece of hideous and untimely irony? You are to turn back, you victorious columns that have pushed the lines of imperial conquest from Chattanooga to Atlanta and driven the army of the rebellion in rout and demoralization to the borders of the Gulf; you are to loose your hold on the vital communications of the enemy, you, veterans of Virginia, that have fought your way to where you stand in a campaign that makes historic wars a plaything and marks your path from the Rapidan to the James in characters of blood and flame,—all, all are to retire and allow copperheads and conspirators to settle, over the graves of Union soldiers fallen in a useless war, the terms of surrender to Jeff. Davis and his crew. *Such* are copperhead principles, such is the copperhead platform.

III.

In the sad total of "failure in the experiment of war," which you will first learn from the creed of Chicago sums up the history of four years, you are invited by its framers to accept their—"sympathy." You have, according to the doctrines and declarations of these men, not only *failed*, but you have been *fooled*. Your love of the old flag, your determination to defend it, your hatred of treason, your deathless patriotism are mere fancy and fustian, the great army of martyrs that have offered up their lives a willing sacrifice on the altar of the Union were poor simpletons, the tens of thousands of your comrades who pine in rebel prisons, and the hundreds of thousands who bear about in their bodies the insignia of glorious wounds are deluded victims—and in this unhappy predicament you are offered their profound "sympathy." Sympathy—it is a precious quality; but there are times when it is the most stinging of insults. We can fancy the feelings with which the war-worn veterans of Grant and Sherman will receive this gushing tender of copperhead "sympathy." From the enemy in your front you have won something more than *sympathy*: you have extorted *his respect*, and you rightly regard this as much more valuable than the hollow commiseration of copperheads. For *their* sympathy, the Chicago resolutions sufficiently show where *that* goes. Men who have nothing but contumely for the government you are defending, and whose declaration of principles contains not a word against treason and rebellion, not a syllable about the infernal treatment of our prisoners by the rebels, not a whisper of reproof for the crime of those southern politicians which has desolated half a continent, show their hands too plainly to blind you as to the real drift of their "sympathy." You will indignantly tell them to take it where it will be better appreciated and not awaken that disgust which it must stir in the breast of every patriotic soldier.

IV.

The Copperheads know your sentiments. They know that the army is sound and incorruptible. They know that there has been no time during the past three years that you would not as lief fight them as fight rebels—no time that you would not willingly leave the enemy in your front to attend to the equally base, but far less brave, enemy in your rear.

It is for this reason that they will court you, and try to wheedle you. They know that their doctrines are a stench in your nostrils. They will try to hide this by pretence and palaver. They are huckstering for the army vote. The Copperheads at Chicago carried the platform, nominated Pendleton, one of

their rankest members (who has opposed the army and the war in every vote of his in Congress,) as Vice President, and, to blind you, put up McClellan as President. This is a *ruse de guerre*. They care nothing for McClellan—he is with them only “a name to conjure by,” a tub thrown to the whale. They calculate that there are many men in our armies who will vote for McClellan *anyhow*. It does not occur to them that you look beneath the surface, that you penetrate the real issue, that this issue is the country’s salvation and that you prefer your country’s salvation before the fortunes of any man. American soldiers are not the material out of which to make a Pretorian guard on whose bayonets any man can be hoisted into power.

The armies outside of the Army of the Potomac *never* were affected by the McClellan mania. The men who have fought with Grant, campaigned with Rosecrans and marched with Sherman, are not the men to fall in love with McClellan’s feeble and fruitless style of warfare. A nation that has shared in the glories of Vicksburg and Stone River and Chattanooga and Atlanta has got a long ways beyond the point of being deluded by bombastic “changes of base” and “masterly inactivity.”

But of the old soldiers of the Potomac army, there are still doubtless many left who retain those traditions that time and events have long since effaced from the memories of men. Around the bivouac, in the lull of long summer days, or in the close contact of the winter’s tent, you hear these men tell of the “Young Napoleon” and his career. Prejudices and predilections, natural to them but nothing to you, gradually, by force of repetition, steal their way into your minds. Falsehoods, innocently believed by the old men, but of which you have no means of knowing the falsity, are told you—perhaps believed by you. You are told how the Administration thwarted McClellan’s plans, withheld promised troops, threw obstacles in his path, and ensured defeat where he had organized victory.

Under another issue than that to-day presented to the country and to the army, these questions might be in place. It might be in place to inquire whether General McClellan was a great military genius, as some believe, or an incompetent and blunderer, as others believe; whether the men and material needed to make his campaigns successful were withheld from him, or whether he had lavished upon him the generous resources of the nation; whether the Administration is blameable for removing him when it did, or whether it is blameable for not sooner discovering his incompetence. These are interesting questions no doubt, and they will long be discussed with the warmth of partisan affection and the bitterness of partisan hate. But they are not in issue just now. For our individual part, we believe the record of the Administration to be singularly clear on all these points. We believe McClellan to be neither a great general nor an aggrieved man. We see nothing in his career, either of talent, character, or success that fits him to be President of the United States. But let that pass. It is not a question of his merits or his demerits. It is a question of the principles which he represents. McClellan might have the purity of a Washington, the statesmanship of a Pitt, and the generalship of a Napoleon, yet did he not plant himself fair and square on the issue of the life or death of this nation, he and his claims would pass for nothing.

V.

McClellan, after a delay, the length of which showed the extreme unpopularity of the of the platform on which he was nominated, accepted the nomination of the Chicago Convention. His declaration of principles had been anxiously looked for, because he had put himself on record in letters to army his

friends, that he could only consent to run on a war platform. Would he renounce the platform and thereby renounce the candidacy, or would he accept the platform and ruin himself? The solution of this perplexing problem, given by McClellan in his letter of acceptance, only serves to show the insuperable difficulties that attend his position, and the impossibility of securing votes enough to elect him without making dupes of the one or the other faction of the party to which he looks for support.

The issue made by the Chicago platform is clear and unmistakeable, and demanded to be met with downright assent or dissent. On this McClellan falters in a double sense, keeping the promise of patriotism to the ear and breaking it to the heart. Whether he thinks "the experiment of war a failure" or not, is impossible to determine. He expresses the opinion that the war should have been carried on in a different way from what it has been. There is no end of people who think the same way. For a year and a-half we tried *his* way of carrying on war, and we submit how much of the "failure in the experiment" is due to himself. We have since carried on war in a quite *other* way; and so far from seeing "failure," we find all around the horizon of the war the signs and symbols of magnificent and accumulating success. We think your valor will, ere long, carry this success through to its final consummation in the complete crushing of the rebellion, and the restoration of Union and peace. The Chicago platform declares this impossible. McClellan declares neither the one thing nor the other.

Neither does McClellan pronounce on this question whether "this failure in the experiment of war," as declared by the Chicago platform, should be pushed to the logical result that platform draws, namely the "demand that immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities." His sole utterance on this point is in these words:

"So soon as it is clear, or even probable, that our present adversaries are ready for peace, upon the basis of the Union, we should exhaust all the resources of statesmanship practiced by civilized nations, and taught by the traditions of the American people, consistent with the honor and interests of the country, to secure such peace, re-establish the Union, and guarantee for the future the Constitutional rights of every State."

The platform says "*immediate*," which we understand. The nominee says: "*so soon as it is clear or probable*," which is just saying nothing at all. Who doubts that *so soon as it is clear or probable* that the rebels are ready for peace upon the basis of the Union, we are ready to make such a peace? The expression is an evasive platitude, which McClellan never could have used *had he had in his heart the honest determination to carry through the war to the only point when it will be either "clear or probable" that the rebels will ask for peace.*

How thoroughly are these tortuous windings characteristic of a man who, never instructed by the maxim of the great master of war, that "half measures always fail," gave throughout his military career a lamentable example of its truth, and is destined to add conspicuous confirmation of its verity by his career as a politician.

VI.

From these unintelligible utterances and evasive subtleties, those who seek the rule of action of the party that has set up George B. McClellan as its Presidential candidate are thrown back on the declarations of this party as embodied in its platform. Here we find something we can understand at least. The proposition for a cessation of hostilities on account of the failure of the war, if a lie in its antecedent and an insult in its consequent, is at least intelligible, and leaves plain people in no maze of doubt as to its meaning. And let McClellan refuse, and evade, and spout "Union," without any hint of the means

that are to secure Union, *the principles of the platform are the principles by which he would be governed if the disaster of his election should befall this nation.* If he were ten times the patriot he is, he would be drawn by the irresistible gravitation of his associations, his necessities, and the creed of his party, into the *policy* of his party. What that policy is, soldiers of the Union, you know. Is there anything in it but what you, holding a Union musket in your hands, must spit out of your mouth with scorn? Surely there is not, unless you are willing that the heroes shall have died in vain, unless you are willing that the trials and the triumphs of the grandest of wars shall pass for nothing, unless you are willing to break your weapons of war and retire to the ignominy which must come upon men who, fighting the battles of humanity till victory was won, had not the courage to snatch its fruits!

The Copperheads have put up McClellan because they hope your suffrages will enable them to carry through their cherished project of a surrender to Jeff. Davis. *They forget the terrible rebuke that came up from your ranks, like a great Atlantic swell, when their nominee, a year ago in his Woodward letter hinted, in a far feebler way than he now does by running on the Chicago platform, his affiliation with the peace party.* It would indeed be time to despair of the Republic if American soldiers could be the dupes of so base a plot as the Copperheads have laid. But the country is destined to no such humiliation. The voice of the Army will on the 8th of November, proclaim in thunder-tones that the war must be prosecuted till the rebellion is quelled and the Union restored. And as the rebels chose to *secede* from the administration of Abraham Lincoln, you are going to see to it that they swallow that particular pill by *succumbing* to the administration of Abraham Lincoln.

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1864.

UNION CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE.

Hon. E. D. MORGAN, of New York.

" JAS. HARLAN, of Iowa.

" L. M. MORRILL, of Maine.
(Senate.)

Hon. E. B. WASHBURNE, of Illinois.

" R. B. VAN VALKENBURG, N.Y.

" J. A. GARFIELD, of Ohio.

" J. G. BLAINE, of Maine.

(House of Representatives)

E. D. MORGAN, *Chairman.*

JAS. HARLAN, *Treasurer.*

D. N. COOLEY, *Sec'y.*

COMMITTEE ROOMS, *Washington, D. C., Sept. 2, 1864.*

DEAR SIR: The Union Congressional Committee, in addition to the documents already published, propose to issue immediately the following documents for distribution among the people.

1. McClellan's Military Career Reviewed and Exposed.
2. George H. Pendleton, his Disloyal Record and Antecedents.
3. The Chicago Copperhead Convention, the men who composed and controlled it.
4. Base surrender of the Copperheads to the Rebels in arms.
5. The Military and Naval Situation, and the Glorious Achievements of our Soldiers and Sailors.
6. A Few Plain Words with the Private Soldier.
7. What Lincoln's Administration has done.
8. The History of McClellan's "Arbitrary Arrest" of the Maryland Legislature.
9. Can the Country Pay the Expenses of the War?
10. Doctrines of the Copperheads North identical with those of the Rebels South.
11. The Constitution Upheld and Maintained.
12. Rebel Terms of Peace.
13. Peace, to be enduring, must be Conquered.
14. A History of Cruelties and Atrocities of the Rebellion.
15. Evidences of a Copperhead Conspiracy in the Northwest.

The above documents will be printed in English and German in eightor sixteen page pamphlets, and sent postage free according to directions at the rate of one or two dollars per hundred copies. The plans and purposes of the Copperheads having been disclosed by the action of the Chicago Convention, they should at once be laid before the loyal people of the country. There is but two months between this and the election, and leagues, clubs, and individuals should lose no time in sending in their orders. Remittances should be made in Greenbacks or drafts on New York City, payable to the order of James Harlan.

Address—

Free.

Hon. JAMES HARLAN,

Washington, D. C.

Very respectfully, yours, &c.,

D. N. COOLEY, *Secretary.*

Printed by L. Towers for the Union Congressional Committee.